

SAHARA-ROOTS pledged to help in Ouarzazate, Morocco on "Earthday" 21 and 22 April, 2012.



Our planet, our home is being neglected. Climate change continues unabated. It seems there's a new ecological disaster happening almost daily. This Earth Day it's time to mobilize the planet from the ground up to send a message that the Earth won't wait!

In Morocco, the government announced an unprecedented National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development, the first commitment of its kind in Africa and the Arab world, which will introduce new environmental laws for the country. Source: *Earthday 2010* www.earthday.org

The 42nd Anniversary of Earth Day was celebrated worldwide and focused on building the environmental movement and engaging new environmental activists around the globe. By facilitating relationships with new communities, the Earth Day Network brought together an unprecedented number of individuals and organizations alike, to celebrate the environment on April 22nd.

More than one billion people in 192 countries took part in the 42nd Anniversary of Earth Day. From Cairo to Beijing, Melbourne to Rome, Rio to St. Louis, communities everywhere stood united in their effort to Mobilize the Earth™.

So it was with great gratitude that the Sahara-Roots Foundation of the Netherlands accepted an invitation from Halim and Ibrahim Sbaï of L'Association Zaila to participate in the Earth Day activities that would be held in Ouarzazate, Morocco on the 21st and 22nd of April 2012.

CLEAN UP in OUARZAZATE



On the 21st of April together with 200 schoolchildren and under the guidance of teachers, representatives of L'Association Zaila, SMIT (Ministry of Tourism Morocco), Legambiente of Italia, representatives of Environmental departments of Ouarzazate, Ilham Bakal and Wanda Hebly of Sahara Roots from the Netherlands, as well as many volunteers, we set out early in the morning to help clean-up a designated

area just outside of Ouarzazate. It was heart warming to hear the children singing Arabic songs with Ilham as they worked hard at picking up rubbish in the heat of the desert sun. Gloves, caps and security jackets had been donated by Legambiente. an Italian non profit organization with the aim to "Clean the World". www.legambiente.it

The teachers explained the importance of taking care of this fragile environment and the time it takes to disintegrate plastic in desert areas: some 2000 years!! The use of sustainable products such as the beautiful baskets of natural fiber that are made in this area, are much better to use when shopping than the treacherous plastic bags that are now plaguing this environment!

After this hard work we all returned to the sports centre of Ouarzazate for drinks and to listen to presentations given by various organizations. Sahara Roots donated 30 booklets "Me and my Sahara" to the teachers. This booklet can be used to teach children about the delicate balance of nature in their environment and how important it is to take care of it.

www.sahara-roots.org

ROUND TABLE PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



In the afternoon of the 21st of April several organizations involved in the Earth Day activities, joined the presentations and discussions in the Chamber of Commerce in Ouarzazate given about the fragile environment of the south of Morocco and sustainable development of this region.

Mr. Med Laghdaf Cheikh Maoulainine of the Ministère du Tourisme Ouarzazate explained the "PATDO", plans which have been developed by the Department of Tourism and Handicraft Development concerning rural tourism in the oases and the pre-Saharan areas.

Halim Sbaï of L'Association Zaila presented the "Taragalte Concept" which was born out of a partnership between the local team with local foundations as well as national and international institutions, all wishing to make a contribution to the development of this region, in which they are trying to find sustainable ways to develop the cultural, social and economic aspects of the region of M'hamid, the last oasis of the Draa Valley, the door to the Sahara in the south west of Morocco. The pressure of the tourist industry and the ongoing desertification is devastating and therefore Taragalte Concept wants to show an alternative model for cultural and environmental conscious tourism.

Legambiente (League for the Environment) was represented by Hicham lahyani and Cinzia Cecchetto and they explained that their aim is to "clean the world". They first worked locally in Italy but now participate actively together with many NGOs around the world. It was really great working with them during the activities in Ouarzazate. Hicham also explained the "Musicycle" which is a way to produce energy while peddling on a non moving bicycle and being able to use this energy during festivals for example. This would reduce the emission of CO2 drastically by reducing the use of "normal" fossil energy. The aim is respect for the environment.



The mission of *Novamont* (www.novamont.it) represented by Chistopher, is to find solutions to the pressing problems of environmental pollution by developing products from renewable raw materials of agricultural origin, which minimises production of post-consumption waste. One of the products shown was a plastic bag made from a product that is naturally biodegradable and compostable. This would be the perfect solution for the many non degradable plastic bags flying through the skies of the Sahara!

Wanda Hebly and Ilham Bakal of *Sahara Roots* presented the clean up activities, tree planting and as well as the educational activities of their foundation. The participants were very grateful for the Arabic translations by Ilham who had travelled to Morocco together with Wanda to join the Earth Day activities.

A big thank you to Mr Mohamed Khattouch of the Ministère du Tourisme Institut Technologie Hotellère et Touristique for keeping us on track for our maximum 20min presentations!



MINI MARATHON 22nd April

A mini marathon was organised for children between the ages of 6 – 16 just outside of the Institut de Technologie, Hoteliere et Touristique in Ouarzazate. It was great to see how all children were so enthusiastic about this event. After official registration, the children were placed in three different categories and as live Berber music was played on the sidelines, the children began their run. It is of course important that children also participate in sports activities which was explained to them by the teachers after the race. Medals were given to all those who ran the race through the streets of Ouarzazate and donated gifts such as rulers, pens, pencils. Also children booklets " Me and my Sahara" were given to the best 30 runners. The winner of each category received a bicycle, a wonderful gift for helping children to get to their schools. There were many happy faces and none of the children left empty handed. A big thank you to all those who helped to make this event such a great success!

TREE PLANTING at the « Institut de Technologie, Hoteliere et Touristique »



Together with the winners of the Mini Marathon we planted six Eucalyptus trees on the grounds of the Institut. Mr Mohamed Khattouch explained to us that he had been responsible for planting the trees that were now growing on the grounds but that he had never seen the Groasis Waterboxx (www.groasis.com) which we had brought with us for the purpose of planting trees. Sahara Roots donated three of these Waterboxx's to the Institut during this tree-planting ceremony. Ilham and Wanda explained how the Waterboxx works and we could see that everyone was interested in this new invention by Pieter Hoff from the

Netherlands. The Groasis Waterboxx is made from recycled plastic and is an example of how Mother Nature helps in solving the problem of planting trees in deserts climates. It is an 'intelligent water incubator that collects and stores water from the air by condensation and rain. We are invited to check the progress of the newly planted trees and how they are doing in their containers the next time we are in Ouarzazate. Thank you Mohamed for taking good care of them together with your students.

Finally We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers for helping during the Earth Day activities on 21 and 22 April 2012. We look forward to working with you again next year!

Wanda Hebly and Ilham Bakal
Sahara-Roots Foundation
The Netherlands.
www.sahara-roots.org